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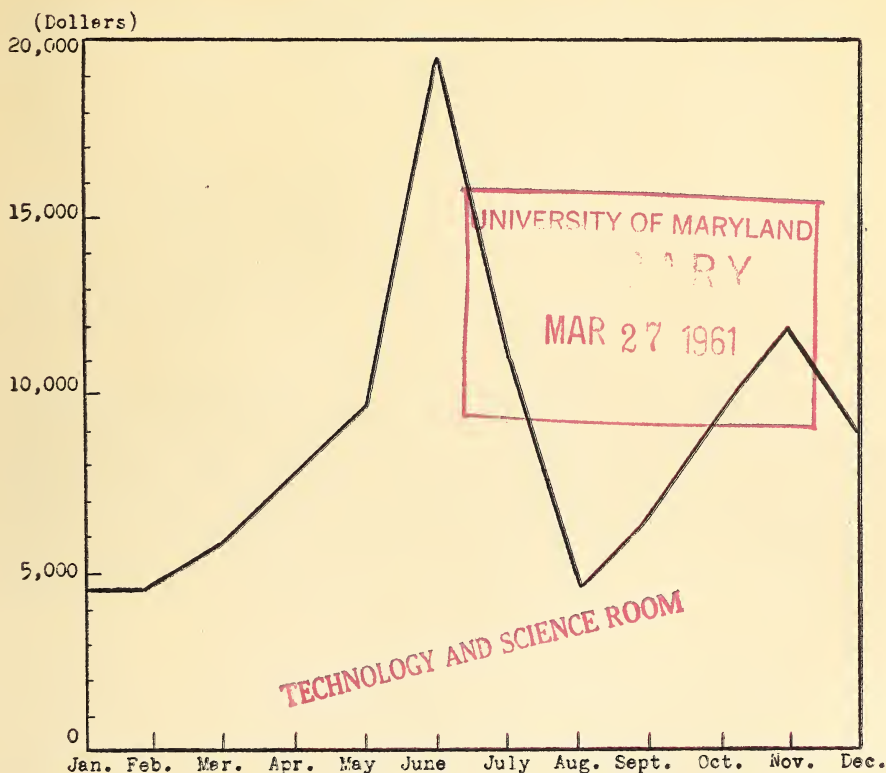
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PRODUCTION AND MARKETING OF FRUITS AND VEGETABLES IN THE BATON ROUGE TRADE AREA IN 1946

By

F. E. STANLEY, R. B. JOHNSON, AND M. D. WOODIN



MONTHLY SALES OF FRUITS AND VEGETABLES BY 35 LOCAL GROWERS
SELLING IN BATON ROUGE, 1946

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AND
AGRICULTURAL AND MECHANICAL COLLEGE
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F. E. STANLEY, R. B. JOHNSON, AND M. D. WOODIN

INTRODUCTION

Metropolitan Baton Rouge has grown rapidly in recent years and has become an important center for industry, business, education, and government. However, the growth of the city has not been accompanied by proportionate increases in some of the public facilities and services needed to serve the people adequately. Prominent among those lagging behind are facilities for effectively marketing fresh farm produce, such as fruits, vegetables, poultry, and eggs. Although most population centers of comparable size have facilities, either publicly or privately owned, where farm produce is bought and sold, Baton Rouge has no organized produce market.

Recognizing the need for an organized produce market, civic groups in Baton Rouge made a request for a study to develop information which would serve as a basis for appraising the present system of handling fresh produce and to determine the feasibility of establishing a centralized produce market in the city.

Purposes of the Study

The major purposes of the producers' survey were to obtain data on the variety and volume of production of fruits and vegetables in the nine-parish trade area;² to secure information on present marketing practices and trade outlets; to study the seasonal pattern of production and marketing; to ascertain the possible benefits which might be derived from a produce market in Baton Rouge; and finally, to evaluate the potentialities of the area as a year-round source of supply of fruits and vegetables.

Procedure

A field survey of fruit and vegetable growers was made in the nine parishes comprising the Baton Rouge trade area in the spring of 1947. In an effort to obtain data from every grower selling in the Baton Rouge market, a list of names of growers was compiled after interviews with

¹ This report primarily concerns fruit and vegetable production and marketing by local growers, and is part of a study of the Baton Rouge produce trade. Cooperating in the over-all study were the Louisiana Market Commission, the Louisiana Agricultural Extension Service, and the Marketing Facilities Branch of the Production and Marketing Administration, U.S.D.A.

The authors wish to express their appreciation to Dr. B. M. Gile, whose criticism and suggestions improved the manuscript.

² For the purposes of this study, the Baton Rouge trade area is considered to include the parishes of Ascension, East Baton Rouge, East Feliciana, Iberville, Livingston, Pointe Coupee, St. Helena, West Baton Rouge, and West Feliciana.

county agents, Baton Rouge wholesalers and retailers, and growers in each community of the trade area.

Although detailed information was obtained from 78 growers, only 35 were found who sold a variety of fruits and vegetables in Baton Rouge in 1946. Forty-three of the 78 growers interviewed did not market any of their produce in Baton Rouge. It is estimated that more than 80 per cent of the growers selling in Baton Rouge on a year-round basis were included in the survey. In addition to these growers, there are probably 25 others who sell in Baton Rouge one or two commodities, such as sweet potatoes or Irish potatoes, in season. It was impractical to include these growers in the survey.

Other data on local fruit and vegetable supplies and volume of consumption were obtained from the City-Parish Planning Committee, railroad officials, wholesalers, and retailers.

IMPORTANCE OF BATON ROUGE AS A CONSUMPTION CENTER FOR FRESH FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

The importance of Baton Rouge as a consumption center for fresh fruits and vegetables is indicated by its population. The City-Parish Planning Committee estimates the population of East Baton Rouge Parish to be approximately 115,000, of which about 80 per cent, or 92,000, live in Baton Rouge and adjacent areas. To this may be added the population of a number of nearby suburban communities which would give a total of approximately 100,000 persons in the metropolitan area.

From information obtained from wholesalers, retailers, and railroad officials, it is estimated that in 1946 the equivalent of 2,000 carloads of fresh fruits and vegetables was handled on a wholesale basis in Baton Rouge. Of this total about 85 per cent, or 1,700 carloads, were handled by Baton Rouge wholesalers and one chain store warehouse. The remaining 15 per cent, or 300 carloads, were purchased by retailers, restaurants, hotels, and consumers directly from local growers, truckers and out-of-city wholesalers.

Wholesalers estimate that the equivalent of 340 carloads was shipped to retailers in the outlying trade area, and approximately 1,660 carloads of fresh fruits and vegetables were consumed in the Baton Rouge metropolitan area in 1946.

SOURCES OF FRESH FRUITS AND VEGETABLES CONSUMED IN BATON ROUGE METROPOLITAN AREA IN 1946

Of the 1,660 carloads of fresh fruits and vegetables consumed in Baton Rouge in 1946, the equivalent of 1,535 carloads was shipped into the city from more distant production areas, and 125 carloads, or about 8 per cent of local consumption, were supplied by local growers.

The 1,700 carloads of fresh fruits and vegetables handled by Baton

Rouge wholesalers in 1946 were divided almost equally between railroad and truck receipts. Railroads brought in 809 carloads, or 48 per cent of the total (Table I). The remaining 891 carloads, or 52 per cent, were truck receipts. Of the 2,000 carloads handled by all dealers, however, truck receipts accounted for 1,191 carloads, or 60 per cent of the total.

TABLE I. RAIL UNLOADS OF FRUITS AND VEGETABLES IN BATON ROUGE, BY MONTHS, 1946

MONTH	Irish potatoes	Other fresh fruits and vegetables	Total	Per cent of total
	<i>Carloads</i>			
January.....	46	30	76	9.4
February.....	38	17	55	6.8
March.....	40	31	71	8.8
April.....	14	43	57	7.0
May.....	15	32	47	5.8
June.....	5	41	46	5.7
July.....	12	46	58	7.2
August.....	24	66	90	11.1
September.....	26	66	90	11.4
October.....	22	63	85	10.5
November.....	22	41	63	7.8
December.....	33	36	69	8.5
Totals.....	297	512	809	100.0

Source: Louisiana and Arkansas, Missouri Pacific, and Illinois Central Railroads.

PRODUCTION AND MARKETING OF FRESH FRUITS AND VEGETABLES IN THE BATON ROUGE TRADE AREA

The importance of the farms in the Baton Rouge trade area as a potential source of supply of fresh fruits and vegetables for the local market is indicated in Table II. In the nine-parish area, almost 34,000 acres were devoted to fruit and vegetable production, with a value of more than three and one-quarter million dollars in 1944. This represents the equivalent of about 2,225 carloads, or between 500 and 600 carloads more than was consumed in Baton Rouge in 1946.

A considerable proportion of the 1,660 carloads of fresh fruits and vegetables consumed in the city in 1946 consisted of such items as oranges, bananas, apples, lemons, and other fruits not produced in this area. However, the fact remains that there exists in Baton Rouge a sizable demand for fresh produce which could be supplied to a large extent by local growers to the mutual benefit of dealers, consumers, and producers in the Baton Rouge area.

TABLE II. NUMBER OF FARMS AND ACREAGE OF SELECTED VEGETABLES IN NINE PARISHES OF THE BATON ROUGE TRADE AREA, 1944

COMMODITY	TOTAL		ASCENSION		EAST BATON ROUGE		EAST FELICIANA		IBERVILLE	
	Number of Farms	Acreage	Number of Farms	Acreage	Number of Farms	Acreage	Number of Farms	Acreage	Number of Farms	Acreage
Irish potatoes.....	7,689	13,467	851	1,592	970	1,124	1,318	1,476	272	391
Sweet potatoes.....	7,679	8,600	833	974	1,012	1,029	1,370	1,258	226	233
Beans, green*.....	2,998	5,447	517	929	136	125	282	342	29	17
All other vegetables and melons*.....	1,796	3,725	349	674	151	231	51	159	47	207
Strawberries.....	1,438	1,776	361	337	10	6	1	2	0	0
Cabbage*.....	168	352	28	24	63	66	7	102	22	26
Tomatoes*.....	200	228	28	10	71	34	4	12	30	21
Peas, green*.....	95	177	29	22	14	4	1	15	11	6
Corn, green*.....	62	81	8	8	15	9	3	26	17	21
Totals.....	.....	33,853	.....	4,570	.....	2,628	.....	3,392	.....	922

COMMODITY	LIVINGSTON		POINTE COUPEE		ST. HELENA		WEST BATON ROUGE		WEST FELICIANA	
	Number of Farms	Acreage	Number of Farms	Acreage	Number of Farms	Acreage	Number of Farms	Acreage	Number of Farms	Acreage
Irish potatoes.....	1,078	774	1,451	4,681	841	605	309	838	599	7,686
Sweet potatoes.....	1,122	1,074	1,100	867	923	578	237	140	856	2,438
Beans, green*.....	1,057	1,589	1	†	938	2,365	16	11	22	69
All other vegetables and melons*.....	507	677	386	715	179	276	97	172	29	614
Strawberries.....	897	1,269	0	0	168	162	0	0	1	†
Cabbage*.....	15	27	0	0	10	23	18	15	5	69
Tomatoes*.....	18	8	2	2	25	6	20	8	2	127
Peas, green*.....	13	10	6	12	14	4	5	3	2	101
Corn, green*.....	3	1	1	†	10	7	5	9	0	0
Totals.....	.....	5,429	.....	6,277	.....	4,035	.....	1,196	.....	5,404

Source: 1945 Census of Agriculture.

*Includes only acres harvested for sale.

†One-half acre or less.

Baton Rouge has the somewhat unique situation of being located adjacent to large commercial vegetable producing areas which ship out most of their produce, and at the same time is a relatively large fruit and vegetable consuming center shipping in practically all of these commodities. There are several possible explanations of this production-consumption paradox. Most of the local producers believe that the absence of a common meeting place for buyers and sellers underlies much of this difficulty, and that a produce market would solve many of their marketing problems. Other reasons are the shortage of labor for peddling produce from store to store, and the practice on the part of existing marketing agencies of shipping most of their produce to established outlets in northern markets.

Market Outlets

The main marketing outlets for growers in the trade area are farmers' cooperative shipping associations, private produce dealers and shippers, trucker-buyers, and canning plants. Minor outlets include produce brokers and small-lot receivers in central markets, the New Orleans French Market, and wholesale and retail buyers in Baton Rouge and other towns in the area.

Production and Marketing Practices in Important Sub-Areas

The important centers of fruit and vegetable production in the Baton Rouge trade area are those surrounding Gonzales, Denham Springs, Plaquemine, St. Francisville, New Roads, and Montpelier. The crops grown and marketing practices employed in each of these areas are discussed briefly below.

Gonzales Area. Strawberries, snap beans, and shallots are the three important fruit and vegetable crops in the Gonzales area of Ascension Parish. The strawberries and snap beans are shipped largely through a farmers' cooperative association and private shippers. The shallots are sold mostly to local shipper-buyers.

Denham Springs Area. Strawberries and snap beans are the important truck crops in the Denham Springs area of Livingston Parish. A large part of these commodities is shipped through private dealers in Denham Springs.

Plaquemine Area. Shallots are the most important vegetable crop in the Plaquemine area of Iberville Parish. Most of the shallots are moved by private shippers. Several small diversified vegetable farms are found within a five-mile radius of Plaquemine, and most of the produce from these farms is sold to retail stores in the town.

Pointe Coupee Area. Irish potatoes, onions, and cabbage are the principal vegetable crops produced commercially in the New Roads area of Pointe Coupee Parish. The greater part of these vegetables is sold to truckers and private shippers. A considerable acreage is planted

to sweet potatoes in this area, but the bulk of the crop is for farm and home use.

St. Francisville Area. The most important vegetable crop in the St. Francisville area of West Feliciana Parish is sweet potatoes. Most of the crop is marketed through private shippers, truckers, and canning plants.

St. Helena Area. Snap beans, strawberries, green peppers, cucumbers, and squash are the leading commercial truck crops in the Montpelier area of St. Helena Parish. The bulk of these fruits and vegetables is sold to private shippers and truckers.

Almost 70 per cent of the total receipts from produce on the 43 farms not selling in Baton Rouge was accounted for by strawberries and snap beans. These farms were considerably smaller than those that produced for the Baton Rouge market. Vegetable acreage averaged 11 acres per farm, as compared with 19 for the growers who sold in Baton Rouge. Vegetable producers in these outlying areas are an important potential source of supply for a produce market in Baton Rouge.

PRODUCTION AND PRACTICES OF GROWERS MARKETING PRODUCE IN BATON ROUGE IN 1946

Location of the Farms

Thirty-five of the 78 fruit and vegetable growers interviewed marketed produce in Baton Rouge in 1946. Practically all of their production was sold in the city. These 35 producers were found in five parishes: Ascension, East Baton Rouge, Iberville, Livingston, and St. Helena. No producers marketing regularly in Baton Rouge could be found in the parishes of East Feliciana, Pointe Coupee, West Baton Rouge, and West Feliciana.

The distances of the 35 farms from Baton Rouge are shown in Table III. Four-fifths of the growers were within 25 miles, and only two growers were beyond 30 miles of the city.

TABLE III. DISTANCE FROM BATON ROUGE OF 35 FRUIT AND VEGETABLE FARMS SELLING PRODUCE IN BATON ROUGE IN 1946

NUMBER OF MILES FARM IS FROM BATON ROUGE	Number of growers	Per cent of total	Cumulative total of percentages
0.5- 5.0.....	4	11.4	11.4
6.0-10.0.....	10	28.6	40.0
11.0-15.0.....	4	11.4	51.4
16.0-20.0.....	8	22.8	74.2
21.0-25.0.....	2	5.7	79.9
26.0-30.0.....	5	14.3	94.2
31.0-35.0.....	0	....	94.2
36.0-40.0.....	1	2.9	97.1
41.0-45.0.....	0	....	97.1
46.0-50.0.....	1	2.9	100.0
Totals.....	35	100.0	....

Land Utilization and Size of Farms

The average farm selling produce in Baton Rouge in 1946 contained 45.5 acres, of which 22.2 were in cropland. Twelve acres of this cropland were in vegetables. Generally, the land planted to vegetables was used very intensively on these farms. In many cases two, and sometimes three, vegetable crops were harvested from the same plot of land during the year. By following this practice, the average grower was able to harvest 19.4 acres of vegetables from only 12.0 acres of land.

Most of the vegetable farms in the area are small, in terms of the number of acres of vegetables harvested for sale from each farm. Some of the crops grown, however, are very intensive, and a small acreage often represents an enterprise of efficient size. This is true especially of strawberries.

Nearly 60 per cent of the farms harvested less than 15 acres of vegetables in 1946 (Table IV). Four-fifths of the farms had less than 35 vegetable acres, and only seven had 40 or more acres for the year.

TABLE IV. VEGETABLE ACREAGE ON 35 FRUIT AND VEGETABLE FARMS SELLING PRODUCE IN BATON ROUGE IN 1946

VEGETABLE ACREAGE	Number of farms	Per cent of total	Cumulative total of percentages
Less than 5.0.....	6	17.1	17.1
5.0- 9.9.....	5	14.3	31.4
10.0-14.9.....	9	25.6	57.0
15.0-19.9.....	5	14.3	71.3
20.0-24.9.....	0	0	71.3
25.0-29.9.....	1	2.9	74.2
30.0-34.9.....	1	2.9	77.1
35.0-39.9.....	1	2.9	80.0
40.0 and over.....	7	20.0	100.0
Totals.....	35	100.0	.....

Production and Sales

Thirty-three different types of fresh fruits and vegetables were produced by the 35 growers and sold in Baton Rouge in 1946 (Table V). More than 671 acres of land were used to grow this produce. This highly diversified production indicates the vegetable production potential of the area, and emphasizes the possibility of supplying the Baton Rouge market to a larger extent from local production.

The gross value of sales amounted to almost \$105,000 for the year, or approximately \$3,000 per farm. The farms averaged about 19 vegetable acres per farm.

TABLE V. ACREAGE, YIELD PER ACRE, PRODUCTION, AND VALUE OF FRUITS AND VEGETABLES PRODUCED ON 35 FARMS SELLING IN BATON ROUGE, 1946

VEGETABLE	Total acres	Production unit	Yield per acre*	Harvested production	Units sold	Average price	Value
Beets.....	5.0	Doz. bunches	261	1,306	1,294	\$.63	\$ 813
Butterbeans.....	10.2	Bushel	57	503	501	4.36	2,184
Broccoli.....	2.0	Doz. bunches	207	414	414	.87	360
Cabbage.....	41.2	Pound	7,040	290,053	289,668	.023	6,693
Cantaloups.....	6.7	Dozen	32	214	214	.98	210
Carrots.....	7.4	Doz. bunches	285	2,112	2,112	.65	1,369
Cauliflower.....	1.0	Doz. heads	250	250	250	1.50	375
Collards.....	17.3	Doz. bunches	243	4,205	4,205	.69	2,920
Corn (green).....	53.0	Doz. ears	224	11,872	11,872	.34	4,024
Cucumbers.....	6.5	Hamper	163	760	760	1.52	1,158
Egg plant.....	3.2	Hamper	136	435	435	1.51	659
English peas.....	7.2	Pound	861	6,200	6,200	.11	705
Field peas.....	32.2	Hamper	39	1,138	1,128	3.03	3,414
Figs.....	...	Bucket	...	60	60	1.00	60
Garlic.....	4.1	Pound	551	2,260	2,260	.30	678
Green peppers.....	4.5	Hamper	111	500	500	2.72	1,361
Irish potatoes.....	80.9	Cwt.	29	2,331	2,261	3.44	7,786
Italian beans.....	0.1	Bucket	150	15	15	.80	12
Lettuce.....	2.1	Doz. heads	90	190	115	.94	108
Mustard.....	129.3	Doz. bunches	354	45,179	45,155	.71	31,903
Okra.....	31.9	Hamper	72	2,308	2,308	2.53	5,850
Onions (dry).....	3.2	Pound	2,469	7,900	7,900	.037	289
Onions (green).....	5.0	Doz. bunches	276	1,380	1,380	.60	827
Pears.....	...	Bushel	...	190	190	1.05	200
Radishes.....	3.1	Doz. bunches	250	775	775	.59	459
Shallots.....	11.4	Barrel	20	226	226	8.79	1,987
Sweet potatoes.....	58.6	Cwt.	51	1,438	1,248	3.69	4,607
Spinach.....	10.0	Hamper	53	527	527	1.94	1,020
Snap beans.....	66.7	Hamper	60	2,610	2,610	2.72	7,101
Strawberries.....	10.3	Crate	125	800	800	4.48	3,587
Squash.....	8.0	Hamper	110	729	729	1.46	1,065
Tomatoes.....	13.0	Bushel	75	970	963	5.18	4,987
Turnips.....	36.0	Doz. bunches	233	8,400	8,295	.70	5,828
Totals.....	671.1	.....	.....	.....	.....	....	\$104,599

*Includes farmers' estimate of production not harvested.

Yield per acre for fruits and vegetables frequently is lower in the Baton Rouge area than in some of the production areas of other states. However, local growers still have a considerable advantage because of their proximity to Baton Rouge.

The five most important vegetables, on the basis of gross value of sales, produced by the 35 local growers and sold in Baton Rouge in 1946 were mustard, Irish potatoes, snap beans, cabbage, and okra. These five vegetables accounted for 57 per cent of the sales by the 35 growers.

Mustard was the most important vegetable on the basis of acreage harvested and gross value of sales. This crop accounted for about 19 per cent of the acreage and 30 per cent of the value of all fruits and vegetables sold in Baton Rouge in 1946 by the 35 growers.

Monthly Fruit and Vegetable Sales

The different kinds of fresh fruits and vegetables sold in Baton Rouge by local growers in 1946 ranged from 12 in March to 28 in June (Table VI). This means that Baton Rouge consumers were able to choose from a selection including a minimum of 12 fresh fruits and vegetables in any month during the year, and the choice became much wider in the peak months of local production. This indicates that the soil and climate in the Baton Rouge trade area are adapted to year-round fruit and vegetable production, and that the problems of local growers lie largely in the field of marketing rather than production.

The value of monthly sales of fruits and vegetables by local growers varies considerably during the year. In general, the marketing year may be divided into the spring-summer and fall-winter seasons. Volume of sales increases gradually from January to the peak of the spring-summer season in June. Sales are low in August, and increase until the peak of the fall-winter season is reached in November.

Some of the vegetables, such as snap beans, Irish potatoes, and cabbage, also have two distinct seasons each year. Spring beans begin in late April and are practically all gone before the end of June. The fall crop starts in September and ends in November. The spring Irish potato crop comes in during May and is disposed of largely by the end of June. The fall crop is dug usually in late October, and most of the crop is marketed before Christmas. The marketing season for early spring cabbage begins in late March and continues through June. The fall crop comes in October and lasts until the spring crop is ready for market.

Types of Buyers

Retail stores were the most important outlets for the 35 local vegetable growers who sold their produce in Baton Rouge in 1946. About 71 per cent of the value of all fruit and vegetable sales by the 35 local growers, or \$74,120, was accounted for by sales to Baton Rouge retailers. Wholesalers bought about \$24,000 worth of produce from these growers, which represented about 23 per cent of their sales.

Cafes, boarding houses, hotels, etc., purchased over \$3,000 of fresh fruits and vegetables directly from local producers in 1946. In most cases, this trade was of a "regular customer" type, and had been built up over a period of years.

House-to-house retail sales by local producers were not practiced to any great extent in Baton Rouge in 1946. Although it would have been possible to realize somewhat higher returns by marketing house-to-house, most of the growers could not spare the time necessarily required for this method of marketing.

TABLE VI. GROSS VALUE OF FRUIT AND VEGETABLE SALES BY 35 FARMS IN BATON ROUGE IN 1946

FRUIT OR VEGETABLE	MONTH												Total
	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	April	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	
	Dollars	Dollars	Dollars	Dollars	Dollars	Dollars	Dollars	Dollars	Dollars	Dollars	Dollars	Dollars	
Beets.....	43	3	38	119	0	94	0	28	0	82	179	227	813
Butterbeans.....	0	0	0	0	22	1,177	907	78	0	0	0	0	2,184
Broccoli.....	28	0	0	87	0	0	0	0	0	0	68	177	360
Cabbage.....	1,191	403	165	310	354	158	0	0	0	387	1,758	1,967	6,693
Cantaloups.....	0	0	0	0	0	186	24	0	0	0	0	0	210
Carrots.....	193	65	65	73	246	149	26	0	6	75	193	278	1,369
Cauliflower.....	0	0	0	0	0	151	0	0	0	0	112	112	375
Collards.....	344	354	174	54	54	0	0	0	36	174	771	959	2,920
Corn (green).....	0	0	0	0	137	1,321	2,342	224	0	0	0	0	4,024
Cucumbers.....	0	0	0	0	95	591	469	3	0	0	0	0	1,158
Egg plant.....	0	0	0	0	0	308	91	85	77	15	45	38	659
English peas.....	0	0	0	185	47	473	0	0	0	0	0	0	705
Field peas.....	0	0	0	0	227	1,441	1,011	372	242	121	0	0	3,414
Figs.....	0	0	0	0	20	40	0	0	0	0	0	0	60
Garlic.....	30	0	0	0	30	510	0	0	0	0	0	108	678
Green peppers.....	0	0	0	0	54	602	460	109	54	41	41	0	1,361
Irish potatoes.....	79	69	0	0	2,058	2,673	17	69	103	103	2,359	256	7,786
Italian beans.....	0	0	0	4	4	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	12
Lettuce.....	7	7	0	0	0	94	0	0	0	0	0	0	108
Mustard.....	1,402	2,422	3,441	3,952	3,057	2,603	1,650	1,160	3,650	3,757	2,358	2,451	31,903
Okra.....	0	0	0	0	52	1,399	1,497	1,191	1,009	542	160	0	5,850
Onions (dry).....	0	0	0	18	18	39	0	0	0	37	69	108	289
Onions (green).....	24	42	30	186	272	99	0	0	36	45	45	48	827
Pears.....	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	42	0	147	11	0	200
Radishes.....	18	53	154	113	15	6	0	3	6	35	56	56	459
Shallots.....	290	158	18	62	105	53	18	0	114	290	431	448	1,987
Sweet potatoes.....	251	162	111	111	0	0	369	739	277	724	1,531	332	4,607
Spinach.....	180	325	194	19	0	0	0	0	0	29	60	213	1,020
Snap beans.....	0	0	0	163	1,200	2,090	802	41	503	1,671	631	0	7,101
Strawberries.....	0	224	1,046	1,489	582	246	0	0	0	0	0	0	3,587
Squash.....	0	0	0	0	139	438	257	115	77	39	0	0	1,065
Tomatoes.....	0	0	0	0	254	2,661	995	269	295	316	197	0	4,987
Turnips.....	426	327	475	716	638	79	71	0	211	1,035	879	971	5,828
Totals.....	4,506	4,614	5,911	7,661	9,680	19,685	11,006	4,525	6,693	9,636	11,933	8,749	104,599

Farmers' Opinions on Present Marketing Facilities in Baton Rouge

The 35 local fruit and vegetable growers who sold their produce in Baton Rouge in 1946 were asked their opinions on the present marketing facilities in the city. Over 60 per cent were dissatisfied with existing marketing arrangements, and most of them thought that a produce market in Baton Rouge would do much to correct the unsatisfactory conditions. Every grower interviewed said there is a need for such a market, including those who are satisfied with the way they now operate. Growers believe that the most important functions a market in Baton Rouge could perform would be to stabilize prices and provide a cash outlet for a wider variety of fruits and vegetables.

Most growers were reasonably well pleased with the prices received for their produce in 1946, but a large proportion of them thought the retail mark-up on produce was too high in relation to prices received by growers.

SUMMARY

1. The rapid growth of Baton Rouge in recent years has not been accompanied by proportionate increases in many of the public facilities and services needed to serve the people adequately. Among those lagging behind are facilities for effectively marketing fresh fruits and vegetables. Baton Rouge has no organized produce market, although many cities of comparable size have produce marketing facilities.

2. Metropolitan Baton Rouge has a population of about 100,000 and is an important consumption center for fruits and vegetables. In 1946 the equivalent of 2,000 carloads of fresh produce was handled in the city, of which 1,660 carloads were consumed locally.

3. The parishes surrounding Baton Rouge comprise an important area of fruit and vegetable production. Nearly 34,000 acres were devoted to truck crops in the 9 parishes in the Baton Rouge trade area, with production valued at more than \$3,000,000 in 1944.

4. Although Baton Rouge is an important consuming center and the local fruit and vegetable production is large, local growers provided less than 8 per cent of these commodities consumed in the city in 1946. These growers supplied the equivalent of only 125 carloads of produce valued at \$185,000. Total consumption was 1,660 carloads valued at approximately \$2,500,000. Most of the production from the trade area, consisting mainly of strawberries, snap beans, sweet potatoes, Irish potatoes, peppers, and shallots, is shipped through established marketing agencies to northern markets. Most growers contend that the lack of conveniently located marketing facilities prevents them from producing a greater variety of produce, and of doing more of their marketing in Baton Rouge.

5. In the survey only 35 growers were found in the trade area that sold a variety of produce in Baton Rouge in 1946. The 35 growers supplied about 60 per cent of the locally-grown produce sold in the city. Approximately 25 other growers of one or two crops, such as Irish potatoes, sweet potatoes, and strawberries, sold some of their produce in Baton Rouge during the season.

6. The average grower selling a variety of produce in Baton Rouge on a somewhat regular schedule in 1946 had a farm of 46 acres of which 22 acres were in crops. Twelve acres of this cropland were in fruits and vegetables, but by double and multiple cropping during the year 19.4 acres of fruits and vegetables were produced per farm. Sales amounted to approximately \$3,000 per farm.

7. A wide variety of produce was grown in 1946 by local growers supplying the Baton Rouge market. At least 12 locally-grown fruits and vegetables were available each month, and in June 28 were available. Sales by growers, as well as the number of commodities in season, were lowest in late winter and highest in late spring and early summer.

8. Mustard, the most important vegetable grown by the 35 year-round producers serving Baton Rouge, made up 30 per cent of the total sales in 1946. Sweet potatoes, Irish potatoes, and strawberries were important during the months they were in season.

9. Retail stores were the most important outlet for the 35 growers, purchasing 71 per cent of their production. Wholesalers bought 23 per cent of the total.

10. Most growers were satisfied with prices received in 1946, but thought that marketing costs and margins between the producer and consumer were excessive in many cases. They think that a well-organized market, conveniently located, would tend to stabilize prices, stimulate fruit and vegetable production in the area, hold marketing costs to reasonable levels, and provide an opportunity to sell a much wider variety of produce.

11. Other benefits which would be expected from a wholesale produce market in Baton Rouge include considerable savings to growers in travel and labor within the city. In 1946, the 35 growers selling in Baton Rouge traveled nearly 35,000 miles in the city and spent 18,000 hours selling about \$100,000 worth of produce. A market would save most of this travel and labor. It is also reasonable to expect that a market would result in a greater selection of produce available to buyers, plus freshness and higher quality in general.

12. Volume of produce handled in a market largely determines its success or failure. Year-round production of fruits and vegetables in the 9-parish trade area and consumption of fresh produce in Baton

Rouge are large enough to provide the volume necessary for a successful market. To take advantage of this potential volume of business and make the proposed produce market in Baton Rouge a success will require the establishment of adequate facilities for handling produce in a convenient location, the employment of capable management, sound financing, and the cooperation and support of growers, truckers, wholesalers, and retailers. If these requirements are met, it is reasonable to expect that a produce market in Baton Rouge would be of benefit to the entire community.

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